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Casco Bay Estuary Project

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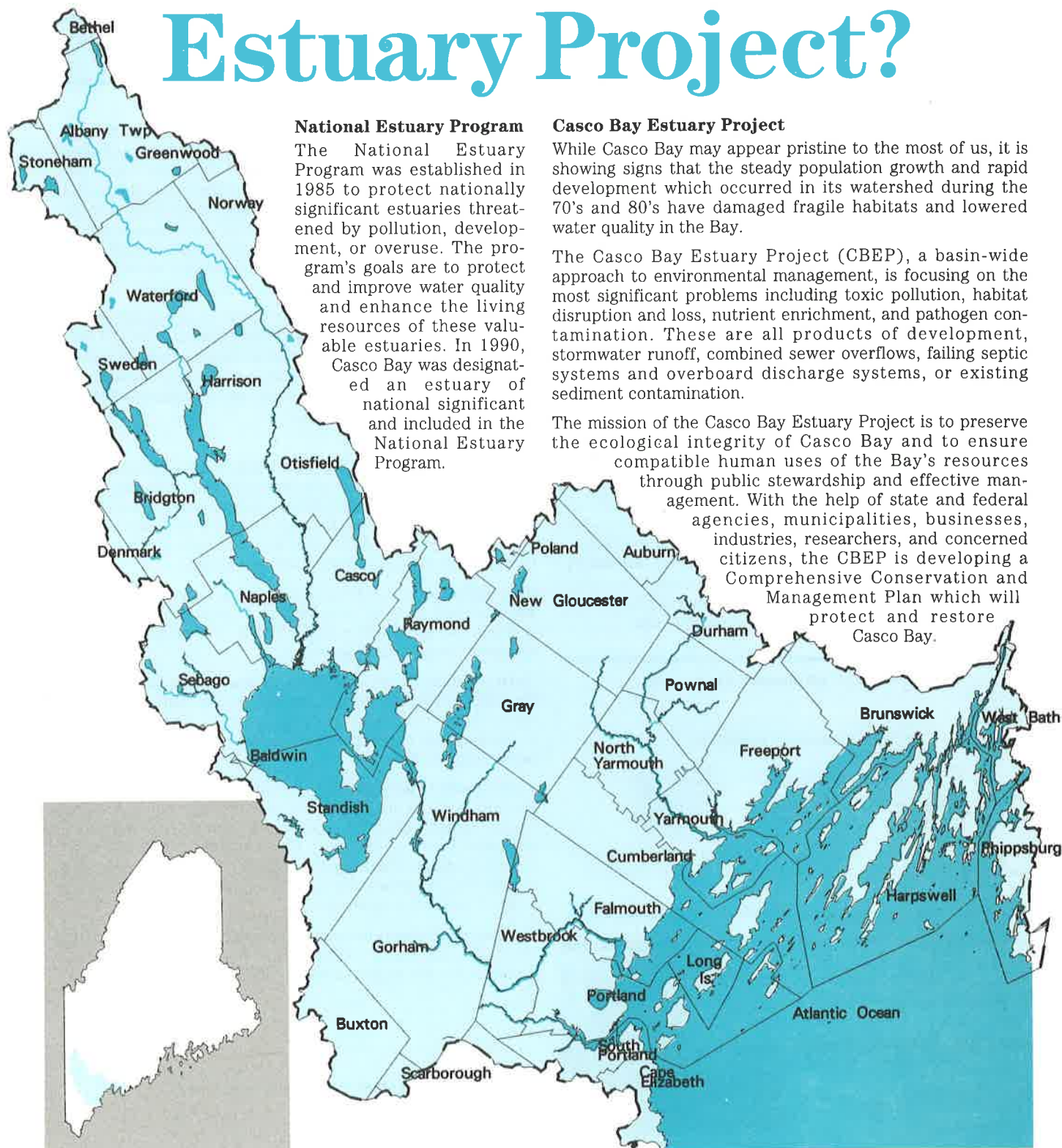
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What is the Casco Bay Estuary Project?



National Estuary Program

The National Estuary Program was established in 1985 to protect nationally significant estuaries threatened by pollution, development, or overuse. The program's goals are to protect and improve water quality and enhance the living resources of these valuable estuaries. In 1990, Casco Bay was designated an estuary of national significance and included in the National Estuary Program.

Casco Bay Estuary Project

While Casco Bay may appear pristine to the most of us, it is showing signs that the steady population growth and rapid development which occurred in its watershed during the 70's and 80's have damaged fragile habitats and lowered water quality in the Bay.

The Casco Bay Estuary Project (CBEP), a basin-wide approach to environmental management, is focusing on the most significant problems including toxic pollution, habitat disruption and loss, nutrient enrichment, and pathogen contamination. These are all products of development, stormwater runoff, combined sewer overflows, failing septic systems and overboard discharge systems, or existing sediment contamination.

The mission of the Casco Bay Estuary Project is to preserve the ecological integrity of Casco Bay and to ensure compatible human uses of the Bay's resources through public stewardship and effective management. With the help of state and federal agencies, municipalities, businesses, industries, researchers, and concerned citizens, the CBEP is developing a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan which will protect and restore Casco Bay.

Project Management

The Casco Bay Estuary Project represents a new approach to environmental management. It seeks to involve a broad spectrum of interests in environmental planning and decision-making. Most importantly, the public will be actively involved in deciding the future of Casco Bay. To achieve this participation the Project has established four committees: a Management Committee and three advisory committees.

The **Management Committee** is responsible for overseeing the project, deciding the specific work that will take place within the project and developing the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan. Its members include: three representatives from each of the three advisory committees; one representative each from the Maine Departments of Environmental Protection, Marine Resources, State Planning Office, and Economic and Community Development; and one representative from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The three advisory committees, the **Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)**, the **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)** and the **Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC)**, provide permanent channel for the public, local governments, and technical experts to have a voice in the project. These committees are directly involved in decision-making through their representation on the Management Committee, ensuring that the Committee's decisions reflect a wide spectrum of interests.

Each advisory committee has a unique role in the project. The **Citizens Advisory Committee** consists of representatives from citizen groups, business, industry, fishing, and other marine users. It works to help get the public involved in the Project, to assist with education activities and to review technical reports.

The **Local Government Advisory Committee** gives municipalities direct involvement in the Project. It helps to identify local needs, develop technical assistance for towns, provide practical advice on implementation and helps to develop funding mechanisms. The **Technical Advisory Committee** is a group of experts from academic and research institutions and technical agencies. It's responsible for advising on research, data and monitoring needs.

Management Conference Structure



*The **Management Committee** has 14 members: three from each advisory committee, four from state agencies and one from the U.S. E.P.A.*

If you are interested in participating in the Casco Bay Estuary Project, or would like more information, call or write:

Casco Bay Estuary Project

312 Canco Road
Portland, Maine 04103
207-828-1043



CASCO BAY ESTUARY PROJECT GOALS

To minimize adverse environmental impacts from the use and development of land and marine resources.

To minimize adverse environmental impacts from storm-water runoff and combined sewer overflows.

To minimize adverse environmental impacts from individual wastewater disposal systems.

To determine the effect of existing sediment contamination on the health of Casco Bay.

To promote responsible stewardship of Casco Bay and its watershed through increased public involvement.

PRIORITY ISSUES

The Management Committee recognized that to be effective it must limit its focus. During 1992, five issues were chosen as the initial focus of the Project. In choosing these five issues, the Committee struggled with the many important issues facing Casco Bay. The Committee's decision to work on these issues first does not mean that other issues will be ignored. After action plans for the first five issues have been developed and implementation is underway, other issues will be addressed in turn.

The five priority issues are the focus of the preliminary Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) for Casco Bay, which was completed in October 1992. The plans in this early CCMP include both actions to be taken immediately and approaches to be investigated and demonstrated before the final CCMP is developed in 1995.

GOOD STEWARDSHIP

The long term health of Casco Bay depends on the combined efforts of local governments, business and industry, state and federal agencies, academic and research institutions, and YOU. The Casco Bay Estuary Project is dedicated to giving citizens an informed voice in the future of Casco Bay, through education, outreach and involvement.

Stay informed - Ask to have your name added to the Casco Bay Estuary Project mailing list to make sure that you receive the newsletter *CURRENTS* and other materials about the Project and Casco Bay.

Join - Come to the meetings of the Casco Bay Estuary Projects's Citizens Advisory Committee. The Committee meets every other month to hear speakers on topics related to the Bay and to work on getting other citizens involved in protecting the Bay.

Voice your concerns - Since many decisions affecting the Bay are made at the local level, you can personally have an impact by attending the meetings of your town's Selectmen or Council, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, or Comprehensive Planning Committee. Let them know that the Bay is important to you! Your input on local decisions really does make a difference.

The future of Casco Bay depends on people like you getting involved and taking action. However you choose to get involved, it's important to make your voice heard!

Written by the staff of the Casco Bay Estuary Project

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